

Constantine

custoditos}. This time Caecilianus did not fail his patron. Constantine, who was strongly averse from taking upon himself to revise, as it were, the judgments passed by so many bishops in council, deprecated their possible resentment by assuring them that his sole desire was to close the mouths of the Donatists.

After hearing the case all over again, Constantine pronounced judgment on Nov. 16, 316. St. Augustine says that the Emperor's letters prove his diligence, caution, and forethought. The praise may be deserved, but it is evident that he had made up his mind beforehand. He re-affirmed the absolute innocence of Caecilianus and the shamelessness of his accusers. In an interesting fragment of a letter written by the Emperor to Eumalius, one of his vicars, occurs this sentence : " I saw in Caecilianus a man of spotless innocence, one who observed the proper duties of religion and served it as he ought, nor did it appear that guilt could be found in him, as had been charged against him in his absence by the malice of his enemies/⁷ The publication of the Emperor's verdict was followed by an edict prescribing penalties against the schismatics. St. Augustine speaks of a " most severe law against the party of Donatus,"* and, from other scattered references, we learn that their churches were confiscated and that they were fined for non-obedience. The author of the Edict of Milan, who had promised absolute freedom of conscience to all, was so soon obliged to invoke the arm of the temporal authority for the correction of religious disunion !

* *Epi\$*t.> 105.